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## THE FIRST UNIVERSAL RACES CONGRESS

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Discussions of the problems of individual racial groups has long been rife, but the year 1911 is likely to become memorable as having witnessed the assembling of the first world gathering dealing with the contact of races in the whole world area. The First Universal Races Congress was held at the University of London July 26 to July 29. The movement originally grew out of a suggestion of Dr. Felix Adler at a meeting of the International Union of Ethical Societies at Eisenach, in 1906. An international executive committee, with headquarters in London, had charge of the preliminaries, but from the first the burden of managing details fell on Mr. Gustav Spiller, to whom belongs most of the credit for the success of the undertaking. Mr. Spiller also edited the volume of papers presented at the Congress.<sup>1</sup>

Two facts have helped to make the problems of race contact urgent in recent times. Within the past few decades there has occurred a striking development of race consciousness accompanied by a quickening of sensitiveness which is a constant peril to inter-racial amity. In the second place, there has arisen a group of practical questions growing out of extended conquests and colonization by European peoples in the lands inhabited by backward peoples of dark skin in all the outlying parts of the earth.

The specific field of deliberation for the Congress is set forth in the original call, as follows:

To discuss, in the light of science and the modern conscience, the general relations subsisting between the peoples of the West and those of the

<sup>1</sup> *Papers on Inter-racial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress*. Edited by G. Spiller. London: P. S. King & Son; Boston: The World's Peace Foundation, 1911. The papers were printed in advance and the sessions of the Congress were entirely devoted to discussion.

East, between the so-called "white" and the so-called "colored" peoples, with a view to encouraging between them a fuller understanding, the most friendly feelings, and a heartier co-operation. . . . The interchange of material and other wealth between the races of mankind has of late years assumed such dimensions that the old attitude of distrust and aloofness is giving way to a genuine desire for closer acquaintanceship. Out of this interesting situation has sprung the idea of holding a Congress where the representatives of the different races might meet each other face to face, and might, in friendly rivalry, further the cause of mutual trust and respect between Occident and Orient, between the so-called "white" peoples and the so-called "colored" peoples.

A questionnaire which was sent to representatives of nearly all the racial groups embodies most of the viewpoints of the promoters of the Congress. Many of the questions, it may be objected, are "leading" ones, and it is unlikely that many answers would be received except from persons actively in sympathy with the movement. Although this will doubtless detract somewhat from the value of the results, it is certain that when the answers are collated an interesting body of opinion on racial sociology will be available.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

1. (a) To what extent is it legitimate to argue from differences in physical characteristics to differences in mental characteristics? (b) Do you consider that the physical and mental characteristics observable in a particular race are (1) permanent, (2) modifiable only through ages of environmental pressure, or (3) do you consider that marked changes in popular education, in public sentiment, and in environment generally, may, apart from intermarriage, materially transform physical and especially mental characteristics in a generation or two?

2. (a) To what extent does the status of a race at any particular moment of time offer an index to its innate or inherited capacities? (b) Of what importance is it in this respect that civilizations are meteoric in nature bursting out of obscurity only to plunge back into it, and how would you explain this?

3. (a) How would you combat the irreconcilable contentions prevalent among all the more important races of mankind that *their* customs, *their* civilization, and *their* race are superior to those of other races? (b) Would you, in explanation of existing differences refer to special needs arising from peculiar geographical and economic conditions and to related divergences in national history, and, in explanation of the attitude assumed, would you refer to intimacy with one's own customs leading psychologically

to a love of them and unfamiliarity with others' customs tending to lead psychologically to dislike and contempt of these latter? (c) Or what other explanation and arguments would you offer?

4. (a) What part do differences in economic, hygienic, moral, and educational standards play in estranging races which come in contact with each other? (b) Is the ordinary observer to be informed that these differences, like social differences generally, are in substance almost certainly due to passing social conditions and not to innate racial characteristics, and that the aim should be, as in social differences, to remove these, rather than accentuate them by regarding them as fixed?

5. (a) Is perhaps the deepest cause of race misunderstandings the tacit assumption that the present characteristics of a race are the expression of fixed and permanent racial characteristics? (b) If so, could not anthropologists, sociologists, and scientific thinkers as a class powerfully assist the movement for a juster appreciation of races by persistently pointing out in their lectures and in their works the fundamental fallacy involved in taking a static instead of a dynamic, a momentary instead of a historic, a local instead of a general, point of view of race characteristics? (c) And could such dynamic teaching be conveniently introduced into schools, more especially in the geography and history lessons; also into colleges for the training of teachers, diplomats, colonial administrators, and missionaries?

6. (a) If you consider that the belief in racial superiority is not largely due, as is suggested in some of the above questions, to unenlightened psychological repulsion and underestimation of the dynamic or environmental factors, please state what, in your opinion, the chief factors are? (b) Do you consider that there is fair proof, and if so what proof, of some races being substantially superior to others in inborn capacity, and in such case is the moral standard to be modified?

7. (a) Do you think that each race might with advantage study the customs and civilizations of other races, even those you think the lowliest ones, for the definite purpose of improving its own customs and civilization? (b) Do you think that unostentatious conduct generally and respect for the customs of other races, provided these are not morally objectionable, should be recommended to all who come in passing or permanent contact with members of other races?

8. (a) Do you know of any experiments on a considerable scale, past or present, showing the successful uplifting of relatively backward races by the application of purely humane methods? (b) Do you know of any cases of colonization or opening of a country achieved by the same methods? (c) If so, how far do you think could such methods be applied universally in our dealings with other races?

9. What proposals do you have (a) for the Congress effectively carrying out its object of encouraging better relations between East and West,

and more particularly (*b*) for the formation of an association designed to promote inter-racial amity?

Over fifty countries were represented among the supporters of the Congress, and more than twenty governments sent official representatives. The fifty-eight papers on the program were contributed by writers from twenty nations. The papers fell into five large groups: Fundamental Considerations; General Conditions of Progress; Special Problems of Inter-racial Economics and Peaceful Contact between Civilizations; the Modern Conscience in Relation to Racial Questions; Positive Suggestions for Promoting Inter-racial Friendliness. At each session of the Congress a particular set of problems was discussed, as follows:

1. Anthropology, excluding inter-racial marriage.
2. Inter-racial marriage and the position of women.
3. Parliamentary rule and autonomy.
4. Economics and industrial questions.
5. Religion and missions.
6. Special problems of particular racial groups.
7. International law.
8. Language and international contacts.

On July 25, the day preceding the opening of the Congress, preliminary conferences on anthropology and international law were held at the University of London. At the former the problem of race mixture, which was later the source of earnest debate in the Congress itself, was the topic of the first session. Professor A. C. Haddon, of Cambridge, voiced the general opinion in his conclusion that miscegenation among proximate types may be, and generally has been, beneficial, but when the types are too remote the results are usually undesirable. In the latter case, however, the disturbing phenomena are more likely to be sociological than biological. Professor Ranke went so far as to assert that it is unscientific, under modern conditions, to speak of "races" at all, since what is usually meant is "types." In a paper at the second session on "Race and Environment," Professor Haddon called in question the recent conclusions of Professor Boas as to the rapid modification of head-form among the children of immigrants in America. In general his opinion was that

the great racial types are persistent although capable of modification, and that environment was the leading factor in fixing original types.

The biological aspects of race also furnished the leading issue at the opening session of the Congress. Obviously the fundamental problem must be to determine the definition of race and to evaluate the relative capacity of ethnic groups. It was the contention of Dr. Brajendranath Seal, of India, that a scientific study of race characteristics does not in the least establish the superiority or inferiority of any race, since each has its share of inferior characteristics conditioned by environment, and consequently social theory should recognize the possibility of progress on the part of all races. Not only are all derived from a common prototype, but all have had a common social history running through the stages of family, clan, tribe, people, nation. The nation is not final, but is only the predecessor of universal humanity.

On two fundamental points there was general agreement, i.e., on unity of origin and fluidity of type. Dr. Felix von Luschan, of Berlin, although accepting both of these conclusions and admitting that better acquaintance among the races will increase mutual sympathy, caused some little stir by asserting that racial barriers will never cease to exist, and that if they should show a tendency to disappear it will certainly be better to preserve than to obliterate them. Von Luschan's paper struck some notes which were not only alien but also embarrassing to the general spirit of the Congress. To a gathering so closely affiliated in spirit with the world-peace movement the following sentiments sounded ominous :

The brotherhood of man is a good thing, but the struggle for life is a far better one. Athens would never have become what it was without Sparta, and national jealousies and differences, and even the most cruel wars, have ever been the real causes of progress and mental freedom. . . . Nations will come and go, but racial and national antagonism will remain; and this is well, for mankind would become like a herd of sheep if we were to lose our national ambition and cease to look with pride and delight, not only on our industries and science, but also on our splendid soldiers and our glorious

ironclads. Let small-minded people whine about the horrid cost of Dreadnoughts; as long as every nation in Europe spends, year after year, much more money on wine, beer, and brandy than on her army and navy, there is no reason to dread our impoverishment by militarism.

Starting with Ratzel's well-known dictum, "'Backward' does not necessarily mean 'inferior,'" Mr. G. Spiller, organizer of the Congress, sought to demonstrate that in all the essentials of psychic and cultural capacity all races are equal. Only in physical characteristics is inequality found, and it has been the social and cultural elements, not the physical, which have transformed man into a civilized being. But the doctrine of race equality, so strongly urged in the printed papers, was not allowed to pass unchallenged in the discussion. Dr. John Gray, president of the Royal Anthropological Institute, not only denied that the races are equal but asserted that it is better for the world that they are not; the one thing needful is that all should have the best opportunity possible. Professor Haddon asserted that man has risen in civilization through the very weaknesses manifested in the development of races; universal amalgamation producing a common type would result in a type very "common" indeed.

The divergence of opinion manifested on this particular point was an index of a deeper divergence which separated the Congress into two camps. One group, which may be called the ethical-sentimental, cherished the thought of a merging of the whole of humanity and the elimination of all those group differences which are the source of animosity. The other section, starting from the basis of exact science, believed that varieties ought to be preserved in the interest of a well-rounded civilization. The one school contended that complete intergroup amity is impossible while differences survive, the other that differences are themselves beneficial if intelligence and sympathy rule in race contacts.

A practical reconciliation of these points of view was found in Dr. Felix Adler's translation of the concepts "sympathy" and "intelligence" into terms of actual experience under modern administrative conditions. In the contact of advanced with backward peoples it is desirable that colonial administrators

should study intelligently and sympathetically the institutions, customs, laws, and psychology of their charges. A striking paper by Professor A. W. Niewenhuis described the work of the Batak Institute at Leyden, where this idea has been put into practice with reference to the Batak tribe of Sumatra.

On a somewhat similar issue there was manifestly the same line of cleavage. A considerable section of the Congress conceived of the world as now passing rapidly over to an era of philanthropic enthusiasm and fraternalism. To this optimistic group—the “millenniumists”—the Congress itself was a sort of jollification meeting the chief purpose of which was to sing the praise of universal reconciliation. To the less optimistic section the Congress represented rather an alarm call and an organized attempt to avert a great and increasing peril. For it was asserted that the perils of race contact are greater now than ever before, because of the augmented race sensitiveness which has come with the growth of education and communication. Furthermore, the hitherto “passive” races are beginning to assert their rights even in face of the increasing aggressions of the great colonizing powers. Again Dr. Adler’s words helped to close the rift. He made it clear that what the modern conscience demands is not merely a sense of brotherhood, but a new respect for the unlikenesses that accompany likeness. So long as there is a free and sympathetic interchange between different types of culture it is relatively unimportant whether race lines be wiped out or retained.

Whatever may have been the shortcomings of the Congress in other lines it would amply have justified its existence by its service in calling conspicuous attention to the fact that the chief practical elements of civilization are becoming universal—“planetary,” to use Tarde’s term—and that world standards are rapidly supplanting parochial and national standards. Dr. Lange, of Brussels, in a suggestive paper on “Tendencies toward Parliamentary Rule,” noted the educational influence of the spread of parliamentary institutions in promoting international understanding. For, as pointed out by Sir Charles Bruce, the spread



of self-government indicates the growth of capacity for self-government.

In the treatment of dependent peoples and communities, the modern conscience rejects as a fallacy the claim of western civilization to a monopoly of the capacity for self-government based on an indivisible interrelation between European descent, Christianity, and so-called "white" color.

Particularly in economic life is the growing standardization of the world manifest. Professor Paul S. Reinsch emphasized the fact that the modern internationalism of capital favors industrial and commercial internationalism. Mr. John A. Hobson attributed the recent scramble for territory to the growth of industry which in turn demands growth of markets. But he further made it clear that the interests of commerce demand that backward peoples become civilized and that they take in maximum quantity the standard goods of civilized states. The most profitable commerce is therefore that with those countries which have acquired the tastes and arts of Europe under conditions of peace and mutual good will.

The present need of cultural standardization was concretely illustrated by the all-pervading demand in the Congress for a universal language. Of course the advocates of Esperanto did not miss so excellent an occasion for urging their cause. The sessions of the Congress furnished a striking illustration of the utility of a world language. Most of the papers and discussions were submitted in English, German, or French, but Italian and Persian were also heard. That a plan of universal co-operation among the peoples requires a common instrument of communication goes without saying, and that without it little effective co-operation is possible has been proved by the ill-success of lesser movements in recent times to secure common action among related groups like the Slavs. Esperanto or some other new language was generally favored. But Professor Toennies, of Kiel, doubted the desirability of an artificial language and suggested the possibility of a revival of Latin as a universal speech. Toennies, however, would not stop with the bare instrument. He urged the translation of all masterpieces of the various national literatures, encouragement of the study of foreign

peoples by scholarships, and exchanges of students, and the founding of an international academy to promote cultural solidarity among the nations.

Those who came to the Congress with the hope of getting tangible results bearing on the problems of race mixture were disposed to complain that they found less of scientific value than they were warranted in expecting. There was indeed an abundance of allusion to the known cases of beneficial miscegenation among proximate types, and the undisputed fact that most of the great historical peoples have been of mixed stock was much in evidence. But the serious problems of miscegenation at present are those connected with the mixing of stocks widely separated in culture and antecedents. On this point little but impressions was offered and most of this was disputed on good scientific authority. If future congresses undertake, as is promised, to work out in substantial form the actual results of race-crossing they will do much to clear up one of the greatest present questions in practical ethnology.

Of other practical instrumentalities for promoting race concord, international law, peace conferences, the press, ethical teaching, and religion received the largest attention. In a gathering so cosmopolitan as this it was of course inexpedient to discuss religious questions in the narrow sense, and it was wisely decided to exclude anything which might offend the religious sensibilities of any group. At the same time there was a general recognition of the large place which the universal fundamentals of religion must have in bringing about deeper harmony among the world's peoples. There was no dissent from Professor Caldecott's opinion that, in the administration of dependencies, governments, while refraining from propagandism, ought to place no obstacles in the way of active religious effort.

Three promising constructive movements of an international character were presented, as it happened, by American representatives. The work of the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome was effectively explained by Mr. David Lubin, and the cosmopolitan club movement in the universities, now becoming international in scope, was presented by Mr. Louis

P. Lochner, of the University of Wisconsin. Mrs. Lucia Ames Mead, of Boston, recounted the aims and methods of the School Peace League which, founded originally in the United States, is spreading its activities into other lands. The Congress received with favor Mrs. Mead's proposal that May 1, the anniversary of the first Hague Conference, be observed as "World Day," on which the flags of all nations should float on all school houses and public buildings. Although not attracting conspicuous attention, movements like these gave encouraging glimpses of a field of future usefulness for the Congress as the central co-ordinating body of a great nexus of effective peace-promoting agencies.

The present Congress had little direct concern with the racial groups that have already achieved. It was rather a world parliament where backward and struggling peoples could have their day in court. Therefore it was inevitable that the Negro problem in its various phases should loom large in the discussions. From every point of view this was desirable, but one important and useful result was achieved which seems hardly to have been in the thought either of the promoters or the writers of papers. The chief phenomena of race contact are not local but universal, particularly the pathological results of such contact. Representatives of West and South Africa reported the difficulties of racial betterment in terms largely identical with the record in the United States. Dr. Frances Hoggan, in a paper on "The Negro Problem in Relation to White Women," pointed out the desperate situation which is developing in South Africa. Mrs. Macfayden, of Cape Colony, also made an effective plea in behalf of the white women of South Africa, whose situation in regions inhabited largely by the blacks, is familiar to the people of the remoter districts of the southern states of America. Tragical confirmation of the uniformity of evil results in the social contact of alien races was found not many months before the Congress assembled in the lynching of black men in South Africa under circumstances closely resembling those of American lynchings.

But it was unfortunate that, while one side of the American

Negro problem was effectively presented, the hopeful, constructive side was largely ignored. It was not only just but essential that the tragic aspects of the race's position should be fairly understood. A protest in the face of all the world against the policy of brutalism which has too much prevailed in the treatment of the American Negro was thoroughly in place in a Congress one of whose functions was to serve as a grievance committee for depressed racial groups. When, however, it is noticed that in the published volume of papers the name of Booker T. Washington is mentioned but twice (one of which mentions it with implied disapproval) the one-sidedness of the discussion may fairly be inferred. It was the Atlanta-Wilberforce aspect of Negro sentiment rather than the Hampton-Tuskegee aspect that came before the Congress, and it must be confessed that this was what the Congress seemed to want.

Dr. Du Bois made a most forceful and a perfectly truthful presentation of the situation as he sees it. If the less tragic half of the story had been told the Congress would have had a proper basis upon which to judge rightly of the Negro question as it is. Professor Haddon's excellent exhibit of photographs and other illustrative material showing the educational achievements of the backward races may have assisted to correct, but could not wholly eradicate, this defect.

The Congress adopted a platform which may be taken as representing the net results of its deliberations. Governments and administrators are exhorted :

1. To urge that the establishing of harmonious relations between the various divisions of mankind is an essential condition precedent to any serious attempt to diminish warfare and extend the practice of arbitration.
2. To commend to individuals of different races coming into passing or permanent contact with one another conduct which shall be courteous and respectful.
3. To induce each people to study sympathetically the customs and civilizations of other peoples, since even the lowliest civilizations have much to teach, and since every civilization should be revered as having deep, historic roots.
4. To emphasize that difference in civilization does not, as is often supposed, necessarily connote either inferiority or superiority.

5. To study impartially and on a broad basis the physical and social effects of race-blending and the causes which promote or hinder it, to request governments to compile statistics on the subject, and to discourage hasty and crude generalizations on the subject.
6. To point out the irreconcilability of the contention prevalent among the various peoples of the world that *their* customs, *their* civilization, and *their* physique are superior to those of other peoples, and also to deprecate the loose manner in which the term "race" is popularly employed.
7. To urge the paramount importance of providing in all lands a universal and efficient system of education—physical, intellectual, and moral—as one of the principal means of promoting cordial relations within and among, all divisions of mankind.
8. To respect, or to endeavor to assimilate or change, the economic, hygienic, educational and moral standards of immigrants rather than to regard them as indefensible or fixed.
9. To collect records of experiments showing the successful uplifting of relatively backward peoples by the application of humane methods, and to urge the application of such methods universally.<sup>2</sup>

It was decided to establish an Association for the Promotion of Inter-racial Concord with a permanent international committee in London and with branches in all parts of the world. Another Congress is expected to assemble four years hence and quadrennial meetings thereafter will probably be held. So far as practicable the successive meetings are to convene in each of the five continents. Plans were formulated for an active campaign in favor of the purposes of the Congress, which involved such ambitious projects as international colleges, clubs, reading-rooms, and the reorganization of the press in the interest of peace.

That the present Congress has justified itself is beyond question, even after all necessary deductions are made. For that some notable deductions must be made was clearly evident to all who followed the discussions dispassionately. The dimensions and complexity of the questions involved, the heterogeneity of types represented, the delicacy of many of the problems to be

<sup>2</sup> Inasmuch as the official report of the proceedings is not yet available, it is impossible to note certain minor changes which were made in some of the paragraphs. The most significant was the insertion of a paragraph calling upon governments to undertake active measures to suppress the traffic in alcoholic liquors and opium among dependent peoples under their charge.

handled, and the inevitable lack of unity in a pioneer movement—all contributed to the diminution of practical usefulness. Moreover, the Congress suffers by comparison with the Hague Conference, for instance, in its lack of a single, clearly defined purpose. But its greatest weakness undoubtedly lay in the divergence of purpose and attitude between the emotional and the scientific points of view. A correspondent in the *Morning Post* referred to the Congressists as “soppy sentimentalists,” and the same journal said editorially that sentiment was more prominent than science in the proceedings. This charge could not fairly be made against the formal papers presented, but there is an unpleasant touch of truth in it when applied to the discussions. Such a convention, if it opens a free forum, will hardly fail to attract the emotional faddist, the radical of every shade, and the one-idea visionary. A *Times* correspondent charged that the Congress had been “packed” beforehand lest inconvenient people should say inconvenient things. If this were the case the makers of the program ought certainly to have “burked” the inconvenient paper of Dr. von Luschan already quoted.

The same correspondent complained with more justice of the prominence which freaks held in the proceedings—“the men with long hair and the women with short hair.” There was also abundant evidence that the radical type of mind was largely present in the quick emotional response which the audience gave to extreme views and to the one-sided appeals of struggling causes. Certainly the Congress had too much of the spirit of a mass convention rather than of a serious deliberative body. Female suffrage, for instance, is a subject far remote from the purpose of the Congress, and yet it was openly charged that the suffragettes had captured the Congress, in face of the fact that its president, Lord Weardale, is himself vice-president of the Anti-Suffrage League.

Someone has recently defined a political insurgent as “a progressive who is exceeding the speed limit.” In the last analysis the difference between the idealists and the “fact-loving people” in the Congress was largely one of the rate of progress. The utopia of fraternalism which the former now think they see

shaping itself out of the discord of nations is certainly destined some time to become a reality. Its coming, however, will probably be as slow as other great social changes have been, and it will certainly never come in rainbow-hued sentiment, but rather in prosaic, practical adjustments. A tangible, personal proof of recent practical progress in social ideals was set forth in Lord Weardale's closing address. Some of the few idealists, then denounced as cranks, who met at Paris little more than twenty years ago to consider the possibility of international arbitration, have lived to see an actual Hague Tribunal.